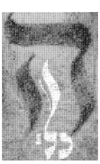
Lements איכה

Translations of *Eikhah* for our world

This translation of *Laments*, the book of mourning poems read on *Tish'a B'Av*, uses principles of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible. It strives to be "concordant", translating related Hebrew words with related English words and following the order and syntax of the Hebrew where possible. It also focuses on the more physical, earthy meaning of words, in order to draw the modern reader towards more ancient ways of seeing and feeling. Sometimes alternate translations are given, indicated by a slash. (When reading aloud, simply pick one of the translations. For *YHVH*, you can read *Adonai* or *Hashem* or "the Eternal".) James Moffat's 1922 translation was consulted. As a somewhat literal translation, *Laments* uses "He" and "His" as pronouns for God, though Torah and common sense command us not to make an exclusively male or female image of God. If you are using *Laments* liturgically, please feel encouraged to change the pronouns. For brief essays on the theology of *Eikhah*, refugees, the Earth, and more, see the end of this booklet.



Laments 4:1, Margaret Adams Parker
www.margaretadamsparker.com
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Read sections from Rabbi Seidenberg's groundbreaking book, now in paperback, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World* (Cambridge U., 2015) at kabbalahandecology.com.

Find more *Tisha B'Av* resources, songs, and teachings online at: theshalomcenter.org/node/1733 and neohasid.org/zman/tisha_bav/.

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 This work is dedicated to all refuges fleeing war and upheaval, and to our remembering their needs.

CHAPTER 1

א אֵיכָה |	1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –
יָשְׁבָה בָדָד	she sat alone,
הָעִיר רַבָּתִי עָם	the city so great / so swelled with people?
הָיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה	She was like a widow.
רַבָּתִי בַגּוֹיִם	The one great among the nations,
שָׂרָתִי בַּמְּדִינוֹת	ministering among the states,
הָיְתָה לָמַס׃	became a slave caste.
ב בָּכוֹ תִבְכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה	2 Crying, she will cry in the night,
וְדִמְעָתָהּ עַל לֶחֱיָהּ	her tear upon her cheek
אֵין־לָהּ מְנַחֵם	There is none for her, no comforter,
מִכָּל־אֹהֲבֶיהָ	from all her lovers.
כָּל־רֵעֶיהָ	All her companions
בָּגְדוּ בָהּ	played traitor with her.
הָיוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים׃	They became for her enemies.
ג גָּלְתָה יְהוּדָה	3 She, Judah, was exiled,
מֵעֹנִי וּמֵרֹב עֲבֹדָה	by poverty, and by (so) much hard labor
הִיא יָשְׁבָה בַגּוֹיִם	She sat among the nations,
לֹא מָצְאָה מָנוֹחַ	not finding any rest;
כָּל־רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשִּׂיגוּהָ	All her pursuers caught up with her
בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים׃	between the confined places.
ד דַּרְכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת	4 Zion's roads are mourning
מִבְּלִי בָּאֵי מוֹעֵד	from being without festival-goers,
כָּל־שְׁעָרֶיהָ שׁוֹמֵמִין	all her gates desolated;

כֹּהֲנֶ֖יהָ נֶאֱנָחִ֑ים	Her priests are moaning,
בְּתוּלֹתֶ֥יהָ נּוּג֖וֹת	her girls grieving;
וְהִ֥יא מַר־לָֽהּ׃	And she – it is bitterness for her.
ה הָי֨וּ צָרֶ֤יהָ לְרֹאשׁ֙	5 Her tormentors were at the head,
אֹיְבֶ֣יהָ שָׁל֔וּ	her enemies had ease
כִּֽי־יְהֹוָ֥ה הוֹגָ֖הּ	For *YHVH* / the Eternal aggrieved her
עַ֣ל רֹב־פְּשָׁעֶ֑יהָ	for the greatness of her sins.
עוֹלָלֶ֛יהָ הָלְכ֥וּ שְׁבִ֖י	Her babes walked captive
לִפְנֵי־צָֽר׃	before foe;
ו וַיֵּצֵ֥א מִן־בַּת־צִיּ֖וֹן	6 and all her splendor went out from
כׇּל־הֲדָרָ֑הּ	daughter Zion!
הָי֣וּ שָׂרֶ֗יהָ כְּאַיָּלִים֙	Her ministers were like deer,
לֹא־מָצְא֣וּ מִרְעֶ֔ה	not finding a place to graze;
וַיֵּלְכ֥וּ בְלֹא־כֹ֖חַ	and (so) they walked, without strength,
לִפְנֵ֥י רוֹדֵֽף׃	before a pursuer.
ז זָֽכְרָ֣ה יְרוּשָׁלַ֗ם	7 Jerusalem remembered
יְמֵ֤י עׇנְיָהּ֙	the days of her poverty / affliction
וּמְרוּדֶ֔יהָ	and her downsliding,
כֹּ֚ל מַֽחֲמֻדֶ֔יהָ	all her precious things
אֲשֶׁ֥ר הָי֖וּ מִ֣ימֵי קֶ֑דֶם	which were from days long ago,
בִּנְפֹ֧ל עַמָּ֣הּ בְּיַד־צָ֗ר	while her people fell into a foe's hand;
וְאֵ֤ין עוֹזֵר֙ לָ֔הּ	and there is no help for her.
רָא֣וּהָ צָרִ֔ים	They saw her, her tormentors,
שָׂחֲק֖וּ עַ֥ל מִשְׁבַּתֶּֽהָ׃	laughing over her becoming stilled.
ח חֵ֤טְא חָֽטְאָה֙ יְרוּשָׁלַ֔ם	8 Sinning she sinned, Jerusalem.

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עַל־כֵּ֖ן לְנִידָ֣ה הָיָ֑תָה	For this an outcast / *nidah* she became.
כָּֽל־מְכַבְּדֶ֤יהָ הִזִּיל֙וּהָ֙	All who honor her despise her,
כִּי־רָא֣וּ עֶרְוָתָ֔הּ	for they saw her nakedness.
גַּם־הִ֥יא נֶאֶנְחָ֖ה	Also her, she is moaning,
וַתָּ֥שָׁב אָחֽוֹר׃	and turned around backward.
ט טֻמְאָתָ֣הּ בְּשׁוּלֶ֗יהָ	9 Her blood / *tum'ah* in her skirts,
לֹ֤א זָֽכְרָה֙ אַחֲרִיתָ֔הּ	she didn't remember her end after,
וַתֵּ֣רֶד פְּלָאִ֔ים	she descended wondrously.
אֵ֥ין מְנַחֵ֖ם לָ֑הּ	There is no comforter for her.
רְאֵ֤ה יְהוָה֙ אֶת־עָנְיִ֔י	*YHVH*, see my poverty / my humiliation,
כִּ֥י הִגְדִּ֖יל אוֹיֵֽב׃	for an enemy became great.
י יָדוֹ֙ פָּ֣רַשׂ צָ֔ר	10 A foe / Trauma spread out his hand
עַ֖ל כָּל־מַחֲמַדֶּ֑יהָ	over all her precious things;
כִּֽי־רָאֲתָ֤ה גוֹיִם֙	She saw other nations
בָּ֣אוּ מִקְדָּשָׁ֔הּ	come within her holy place,
אֲשֶׁ֣ר צִוִּ֔יתָה	which You commanded her:
לֹא־יָבֹ֥אוּ	"They won't come in
בַקָּהָ֖ל לָֽךְ׃	with the community to you."
יא כָּל־עַמָּ֤הּ נֶאֱנָחִים֙	11 All her people are moaning
מְבַקְּשִׁ֣ים לֶ֔חֶם	seeking bread;
נָתְנ֧וּ מַחֲמוּדֵּיהֶ֛ם	They gave up their precious things
בְּאֹ֖כֶל לְהָשִׁ֣יב נָ֑פֶשׁ	for food to restore life.
רְאֵ֤ה יְהוָה֙	See, *YHVH*,
וְֽהַבִּ֔יטָה כִּ֥י הָיִ֖יתִי זוֹלֵלָֽה׃	and look (at how) I was despised.
יב ל֣וֹא אֲלֵיכֶם֮	12 Never to you,

כָּל־עֹבְרֵי דֶרֶךְ	all who pass on the way.
הַבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ	(All of you) look, and see –
אִם־יֵשׁ מַכְאוֹב כְּמַכְאֹבִי	could there be pain like my pain
אֲשֶׁר עוֹלַל לִי	which was doled out to me,
אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה	which *YHVH* caused to grieve
בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ׃	in the day of His furious anger?
יג מִמָּרוֹם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ	13 From a height He sent fire
בְּעַצְמֹתַי וַיִּרְדֶּנָּה	in my bones and overwhelmed them.
פָּרַשׂ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלַי	He spread out a net for my feet;
הֱשִׁיבַנִי אָחוֹר	He turned me / repelled me backward;
נְתָנַנִי שֹׁמֵמָה	He made me desolate,
כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה׃	all day – sickness.
יד נִשְׂקַד עֹל פְּשָׁעַי	14 The harness of my sins lashed on,
בְּיָדוֹ יִשְׂתָּרְגוּ	they were tied down by His hand,
עָלוּ עַל־צַוָּארִי	brought up onto my neck,
הִכְשִׁיל כֹּחִי	making my strength fail.
נְתָנַנִי אֲדֹנָי בִּידֵי	*Adonai* gave me over into (such) hands
לֹא־אוּכַל קוּם׃	that I am unable to stand up.
טו סִלָּה	15 *Adonai* spurned
כָל־אַבִּירַי ׀ אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבִּי	all my mighty warriors within me,
קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד	He called out over me a feast
לִשְׁבֹּר בַּחוּרָי	for breaking my boys;
גַּת דָּרַךְ אֲדֹנָי	a winepress—*Adonai* stomped—
לִבְתוּלַת בַּת־יְהוּדָה׃	for daughter Judah's girl.
טז עַל־אֵלֶּה ׀ אֲנִי בוֹכִיָּה	16 Over these, I am crying;

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עֵינִ֣י ׀ עֵינִי֙ יֹ֣רְדָה מַּ֔יִם	my eye, my eye, she drops water.
כִּֽי־רָחַ֥ק מִמֶּ֛נִּי מְנַחֵ֖ם	For so far from me is any comforter,
מֵשִׁ֣יב נַפְשִׁ֑י	a restorer for my life.
הָי֤וּ בָנַי֙ שֽׁוֹמֵמִ֔ים	My children were decimated,
כִּ֥י גָבַ֖ר אוֹיֵֽב׃	for an enemy overwhelmed / triumphed.
יז פֵּרְשָׂ֨ה צִיּ֜וֹן בְּיָדֶ֗יהָ	17 Zion spread out with her hands,
אֵ֤ין מְנַחֵם֙ לָ֔הּ	there is no comforter for her.
צִוָּ֧ה יְהֹוָ֛ה לְיַעֲקֹ֖ב	*YHVH* commanded for Jacob,
סְבִיבָ֣יו צָרָ֑יו	surrounding him, his tormentors.
הָיְתָ֧ה יְרוּשָׁלִַ֛ם	Jerusalem became
לְנִדָּ֖ה בֵּינֵיהֶֽם׃	outcast / *nidah* between them.
יח צַדִּ֥יק ה֛וּא יְהֹוָ֖ה	18 Righteous is *YHVH*,
כִּ֣י פִ֣יהוּ מָרִ֑יתִי	for His mouth I rebelled (against).
שִׁמְעוּ־נָ֣א כָל־הָֽעַמִּ֗ים	Listen, please—all peoples—
וּרְאוּ֙ מַכְאֹבִ֔י	and see my pain!
בְּתוּלֹתַ֥י וּבַחוּרַ֖י	My girls and my boys
הָלְכ֥וּ בַשֶּֽׁבִי׃	walked captive / into captivity.
יט קָרָ֤אתִי לַֽמְאַהֲבַי֙	19 I called to my lovers.
הֵ֣מָּה רִמּ֔וּנִי	Those deceived me.
כֹּהֲנַ֥י וּזְקֵנַ֖י	My priests, and my elders,
בָּעִ֣יר גָּוָ֑עוּ	they wasted away in the city,
כִּֽי־בִקְשׁ֥וּ אֹ֙כֶל֙ לָ֔מוֹ	while they sought food for themselves
וְיָשִׁ֖יבוּ אֶת־נַפְשָֽׁם׃	(that) would bring back their life / soul.
כ רְאֵ֨ה יְהֹוָ֤ה כִּֽי־צַר־לִי֙	20 See *YHVH* – for mine is torment,
מֵעַ֣י חֳמַרְמָ֔רוּ	my guts were churning,

נֶהְפַּ֤ךְ לִבִּי֙ בְּקִרְבִּ֔י
כִּ֥י מָר֖וֹ מָרִ֑יתִי
מִח֥וּץ שִׁכְּלָה־חֶ֖רֶב
בַּבַּ֥יִת כַּמָּֽוֶת׃

my heart overturned within me,
for rebelling I rebelled.
From outside sword bereaving;
In the house, like death itself.

כא שָׁמְע֞וּ כִּ֧י נֶאֱנָחָ֣ה אָ֗נִי
אֵ֤ין מְנַחֵם֙ לִ֔י
כָּל־אֹ֨יְבַ֜י שָׁמְע֤וּ
רָֽעָתִי֙
שָׂ֔שׂוּ כִּ֥י אַתָּ֖ה עָשִׂ֑יתָ
הֵבֵ֥אתָ יוֹם־קָרָ֖אתָ
וְיִהְי֥וּ כָמֽוֹנִי׃

21 They listened – for I am moaning,
there is no comforter for me.
All my enemies listened
for my evil (doom).
They rejoiced, for You did it,
You brought the day You called for –
and let them be(come) like me.

כב תָּבֹ֨א כָל־רָעָתָ֤ם לְפָנֶ֙יךָ֙
וְעוֹלֵ֣ל לָ֔מוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר
עוֹלַ֛לְתָּ לִ֖י עַ֣ל כָּל־פְּשָׁעָ֑י
כִּֽי־רַבּ֥וֹת אַנְחֹתַ֖י
וְלִבִּ֥י דַוָּֽי׃

22 May all their evil come before You,
and deal to them as
You dealt to me for all my sins.
For so much are my sighs,
and my heart is sickened.

CHAPTER 2

א אֵיכָ֡ה
יָעִיב֩ בְּאַפּ֨וֹ ׀
אֲדֹנָ֜י אֶת־בַּת־צִיּ֗וֹן
הִשְׁלִ֤יךְ מִשָּׁמַ֙יִם֙ אֶ֔רֶץ
תִּפְאֶ֖רֶת יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל

1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –
in His anger *Adonai* / the Lord
clouded over daughter Zion.
He cast down, from skies (to) earth,
Israel's glory,

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וְלֹא־זָכַ֥ר	and didn't remember
הֲדֹם־רַגְלָ֖יו	His foot's resting place
בְּי֥וֹם אַפּֽוֹ׃	in His day of anger.
ב בִּלַּ֨ע אֲדֹנָ֜י לֹ֣א חָמַ֗ל	2 *Adonai* devoured—He had no pity—
אֵ֚ת כָּל־נְא֣וֹת יַעֲקֹ֔ב	all of Jacob's pastures.
הָרַ֧ס בְּעֶבְרָת֛וֹ	He tore down with His burning
מִבְצְרֵ֥י בַת־יְהוּדָ֖ה	daughter Judah's fortifications;
הִגִּ֣יעַ לָאָ֑רֶץ	He reached to the very ground.
חִלֵּ֥ל מַמְלָכָ֖ה וְשָׂרֶֽיהָ׃	He violated kingdom and her ministers.
ג גָּדַ֣ע בָּֽחֳרִי־אַ֗ף	3 With ferocious anger He hacked off
כֹּ֚ל קֶ֣רֶן יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל	all of Israel's horn.
הֵשִׁ֥יב אָח֛וֹר יְמִינ֖וֹ	He turned His right hand backward
מִפְּנֵ֣י אוֹיֵ֑ב	before the enemy.
וַיִּבְעַ֤ר בְּיַעֲקֹב֙ כְּאֵ֣שׁ	Burning into Jacob, like fire
לֶֽהָבָ֔ה אָכְלָ֖ה סָבִֽיב׃	flaming, consuming (all) around.
ד דָּרַ֨ךְ קַשְׁתּ֜וֹ כְּאוֹיֵ֗ב	4 He worked His bow like an enemy,
נִצָּ֤ב יְמִינוֹ֙	He stood firm His right hand
כְּצָ֔ר	as a foe / a tormentor
וַֽיַּהֲרֹ֔ג כֹּ֖ל	and He murdered everything
מַחֲמַדֵּי־עָ֑יִן	precious to the eye;
בְּאֹ֙הֶל֙ בַּת־צִיּ֔וֹן	In daughter Zion's tent
שָׁפַ֥ךְ כָּאֵ֖שׁ חֲמָתֽוֹ׃	He poured out His wrath like the fire.
ה הָיָ֨ה אֲדֹנָ֤י ׀ כְּאוֹיֵב֙	5 *Adonai* was like an enemy;
בִּלַּ֣ע יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל	He devoured / swallowed Israel.
בִּלַּע֙ כָּל־אַרְמְנוֹתֶ֔יהָ	He devoured all her citadels,

שִׁחֵ֖ת מִבְצָרָ֑יו	undermined His fortifications;
וַיֶּ֙רֶב֙ בְּבַת־יְהוּדָ֔ה	And He multiplied in daughter Zion
תַּאֲנִיָּ֖ה וַאֲנִיָּֽה׃	grief and groaning.
ו וַיַּחְמֹ֤ס כַּגַּן֙ שֻׂכּ֔וֹ	6 Like a garden, He tore apart His sukkah,
שִׁחֵ֖ת מוֹעֲד֑וֹ	destroyed His feast.
שִׁכַּ֨ח יְהוָ֤ה ׀ בְּצִיּוֹן֙	*YHVH* caused Shabbat and festival
מוֹעֵ֣ד וְשַׁבָּ֔ת	to be forgotten in Zion,
וַיִּנְאַ֥ץ בְּזַֽעַם־אַפּ֖וֹ	by the rage of His anger
מֶ֥לֶךְ וְכֹהֵֽן׃	king and priest.
ז זָנַ֨ח אֲדֹנָ֤י ׀ מִזְבְּחוֹ֙	7 *Adonai* abhorred His altar,
נִאֵ֣ר מִקְדָּשׁ֔וֹ	disdained His holy place.
הִסְגִּיר֙ בְּיַד־אוֹיֵ֔ב	He made shut with an enemy's hand
חוֹמֹ֖ת אַרְמְנוֹתֶ֑יהָ	the walls of her citadels.
ק֛וֹל נָתְנ֥וּ בְּבֵית־יְהוָ֖ה	They gave a shout in *YHVH's* house
כְּי֥וֹם מוֹעֵֽד׃	like a festival day.
ח חָשַׁ֨ב יְהוָ֤ה ׀ לְהַשְׁחִית֙	8 *YHVH* plotted to ruin
חוֹמַ֣ת בַּת־צִיּ֔וֹן נָ֣טָה קָ֔ו	daughter Zion's wall, stretched a line,
לֹא־הֵשִׁ֥יב יָד֖וֹ	didn't turn back His hand
מִבַּלֵּ֑עַ	from swallowing up,
וַיַּֽאֲבֶל־חֵ֥ל וְחוֹמָ֖ה	and He made rampart and wall mourn,
יַחְדָּ֥ו אֻמְלָֽלוּ׃	together made wretched.
ט טָבְע֤וּ בָאָ֙רֶץ֙ שְׁעָרֶ֔יהָ	9 They drowned in the earth, her gates.
אִבַּ֥ד וְשִׁבַּ֖ר בְּרִיחֶ֑יהָ	He smashed and broke her bars.
מַלְכָּ֨הּ וְשָׂרֶ֤יהָ בַגּוֹיִם֙	Her king and her ministers in the nations,
אֵ֣ין תּוֹרָ֔ה	there is no Torah / no teaching.

גַּם־נְבִיאֶ֕יהָ	Also her prophets,
לֹא־מָצְא֥וּ חָז֖וֹן מֵיְהוָֽה׃	They found no vision from *YHVH*.
י יֵשְׁב֨וּ לָאָ֤רֶץ	10 They sat down to the earth, they
יִדְּמוּ֙ זִקְנֵ֣י בַת־צִיּ֔וֹן	stayed silent, daughter Zion's elders,
הֶעֱל֤וּ עָפָר֙ עַל־רֹאשָׁ֔ם	they lifted dust over their head,
חָגְר֖וּ שַׂקִּ֑ים	tied on sackcloth.
הוֹרִ֤ידוּ לָאָ֙רֶץ֙ רֹאשָׁ֔ן	They let their head down to the earth,
בְּתוּלֹ֖ת יְרוּשָׁלִָֽם׃	Jerusalem's girls.
יא כָּל֨וּ בַדְּמָע֤וֹת עֵינַי֙	11 My eyes were used up by the tears,
חֳמַרְמְר֣וּ מֵעַ֔י	my guts churned up,
נִשְׁפַּ֤ךְ לָאָ֙רֶץ֙ כְּבֵדִ֔י	my liver poured out to the ground
עַל־שֶׁ֖בֶר	over the shattering of
בַּת־עַמִּ֑י	my daughter people,
בֵּֽעָטֵ֤ף עוֹלֵל֙ וְיוֹנֵ֔ק	with exhaustion of babe and suckling
בִּרְחֹב֖וֹת קִרְיָֽה׃	in the town's squares.
יב לְאִמֹּתָם֙ יֹֽאמְר֔וּ	12 To their mothers they would say,
אַיֵּ֖ה דָּגָ֣ן וָיָ֑יִן	"Where is grain and wine?",
בְּהִֽתְעַטְּפָ֤ם	stretching themselves out,
כֶּֽחָלָל֙ בִּרְחֹב֣וֹת עִ֔יר	like a corpse, in city streets,
בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּ֣ךְ נַפְשָׁ֔ם	with their life-force pouring itself out
אֶל־חֵ֖יק אִמֹּתָֽם׃	onto their mothers' chest.
יג מָֽה־אֲעִידֵ֞ךְ	13 What can I make testify?
מָ֣ה אֲדַמֶּה־לָּ֗ךְ	What will I liken to you?
הַבַּת֙ יְר֣וּשָׁלִַ֔ם	O daughter Jerusalem!
מָ֤ה אַשְׁוֶה־לָּךְ֙	What can I compare to you

וַאֲנַחֲמֵךְ	(that) I may comfort you,
בְּתוּלַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן	daughter Zion’s girl?
כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם שִׁבְרֵךְ	For great, like the sea, is your shattering
מִי יִרְפָּא־לָךְ׃	– who will bring healing to you?
יד נְבִיאַיִךְ חָזוּ לָךְ	14 For you did your prophets envision
שָׁוְא וְתָפֵל	deception, and irrelevance,
וְלֹא־גִלּוּ עַל־עֲוֺנֵךְ	revealing nothing for your wrong
לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתֵךְ	to turn back your destiny / your captivity,
וַיֶּחֱזוּ לָךְ	and they envisioned for you
מַשְׂאוֹת שָׁוְא וּמַדּוּחִים׃	a burden of deceit and dejections.
טו סָפְקוּ עָלַיִךְ כַּפַּיִם	15 They struck their hands over you,
כָּל־עֹבְרֵי דֶרֶךְ	all who passed on the road,
שָׁרְקוּ וַיָּנִעוּ רֹאשָׁם	they hissed and they shook their head
עַל־בַּת יְרוּשָׁלָםִ	over daughter Jerusalem:
הֲזֹאת הָעִיר שֶׁיֹּאמְרוּ	“Is this it? The city they said (was)
כְּלִילַת יֹפִי	beauty’s completion,
מָשׂוֹשׂ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ׃	joy’s source for all the earth?”
טז פָּצוּ עָלַיִךְ פִּיהֶם	16 They crack open their mouth over you,
כָּל־אוֹיְבַיִךְ	all your enemies.
שָׁרְקוּ וַיַּחַרְקוּ־שֵׁן	They hissed, and they grit teeth.
אָמְרוּ בִּלָּעְנוּ	They said: We swallowed;
אַךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינֻהוּ	*Akh!* This day that we hoped for,
מָצָאנוּ רָאִינוּ׃	we found, we saw!
יז עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמָם	17 *YHVH* did what He conspired;
בִּצַּע אֶמְרָתוֹ	He pushed through His saying

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אֲשֶׁ֤ר צִוָּה֙ מִֽימֵי־קֶ֔דֶם	which He commanded from early days.
הָרַ֖ס וְלֹ֣א חָמָ֑ל	He tore down and showed no pity.
וַיְשַׂמַּ֤ח עָלַ֙יִךְ֙ אוֹיֵ֔ב	He made an enemy rejoice over you;
הֵרִ֖ים קֶ֥רֶן צָרָֽיִךְ׃	your tormentors’ horn was exalted.
יח צָעַ֥ק לִבָּ֖ם אֶל־אֲדֹנָ֑י	18 Their heart screamed out to *Adonai*.
חוֹמַ֣ת בַּת־צִ֠יּוֹן	Wall of daughter Zion,
הוֹרִ֨ידִי כַנַּ֤חַל דִּמְעָה֙	let down a tear like a torrent,
יוֹמָ֣ם וָלַ֔יְלָה	day and night.
אַל־תִּתְּנִ֤י פוּגַת֙ לָ֔ךְ	Don’t give yourself any break;
אַל־תִּדֹּ֖ם בַּת־עֵינֵֽךְ׃	Don’t let your daughter eye fall silent.
יט ק֣וּמִי ׀ רֹ֣נִּי בַלַּ֗יְלָה	19 Get up! Sing out in the night
לְרֹאשׁ֙ אַשְׁמֻר֔וֹת	to the first of the nightwatches:
שִׁפְכִ֤י כַמַּ֙יִם֙ לִבֵּ֔ךְ	Pour out your heart like water
נֹ֖כַח פְּנֵ֣י אֲדֹנָ֑י	right before *Adonai*!
שְׂאִ֧י אֵלָ֣יו כַּפַּ֗יִךְ	Lift your palms toward Him –
עַל־נֶ֙פֶשׁ֙ עֽוֹלָלַ֔יִךְ	for the life of your babies
הָעֲטוּפִ֥ים בְּרָעָ֖ב	stretched out by famine
בְּרֹ֥אשׁ כָּל־חוּצֽוֹת׃	at every street head!
כ רְאֵ֤ה יְהוָה֙ וְֽהַבִּ֔יטָה	20 See, *YHVH*, and look:
לְמִ֖י עוֹלַ֣לְתָּ כֹּ֑ה	to whom did You deal thus?
אִם־תֹּאכַ֨לְנָה נָשִׁ֤ים פִּרְיָם֙	If women will eat their fruit,
עֹלֲלֵ֣י טִפֻּחִ֔ים	coddled babies—!
אִם־יֵהָרֵ֛ג בְּמִקְדַּ֥שׁ אֲדֹנָ֖י	If priest and prophet are murdered
כֹּהֵ֥ן וְנָבִֽיא׃	in *Adonai’s* holy place—!

כא שָׁכְבוּ לָאָרֶץ חוּצוֹת
נַעַר וְזָקֵן בְּתוּלֹתַי וּבַחוּרַי
נָפְלוּ בֶחָרֶב
הָרַגְתָּ בְּיוֹם אַפֶּךָ
טָבַחְתָּ לֹא חָמָלְתָּ׃

21 Laid down to the earth (in the) streets,
young and old, my girls and my boys,
they fell by sword;
You murdered in the day of Your anger.
You slaughtered, You had no pity.

כב תִּקְרָא כְיוֹם מוֹעֵד
מְגוּרַי מִסָּבִיב
וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה
פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד
אֲשֶׁר־טִפַּחְתִּי וְרִבִּיתִי
אֹיְבִי כִלָּם׃

22 You would call, like a festival day,
(for) my neighbors from all around;
and (so) in *YHVH's* day of anger
there weren't any escaped or remaining
which I had nursed and raised –
my enemy finished them all.

CHAPTER 3

א אֲנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה עֳנִי
בְּשֵׁבֶט עֶבְרָתוֹ׃
ב אוֹתִי נָהַג וַיֹּלַךְ
חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אוֹר׃
ג אַךְ בִּי יָשֻׁב
יַהֲפֹךְ יָדוֹ כָּל־הַיּוֹם׃

1 I am the man who saw affliction
through the rod of His burning anger.
2 Me did He drive and He led –
darkness and no light;
3 *Akh* – Even against me He turned
upending His hand, all the day.

ד בִּלָּה בְשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי
שִׁבַּר עַצְמוֹתָי׃
ה בָּנָה עָלַי וַיַּקַּף
רֹאשׁ וּתְלָאָה׃

4 He wore away my flesh and my skin,
He broke my bones;
5 He built against me and surrounded
– gall and wormwood.

ו בְּמַחֲשַׁכִּים הוֹשִׁיבַנִי
כְּמֵתֵי עוֹלָם׃

6 In darkening-nights He made me dwell
like those ever dead;

ז גָּדַר בַּעֲדִי
וְלֹא אֵצֵא
הִכְבִּיד נְחָשְׁתִּי׃

7 He barricaded against me,
and I cannot go out / get away,
He weighed down my bronze (shackle).

ח גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וַאֲשַׁוֵּעַ
שָׂתַם תְּפִלָּתִי׃

8 Even when I would cry and plea,
He stopped up my prayer;

ט גָּדַר דְּרָכַי
בְּגָזִית נְתִיבֹתַי עִוָּה׃

9 He barricaded my ways with
stone blocks; my paths He twisted.

י דֹּב אֹרֵב הוּא לִי
אֲרִי בְּמִסְתָּרִים׃

10 For me He was a bear ambushing,
a lion in hiding places / stalking;

יא דְּרָכַי סוֹרֵר וַיְפַשְּׁחֵנִי
שָׂמַנִי שֹׁמֵם׃

11 My ways He diverts and He would tear
me up; He made me desolate.

יב דָּרַךְ קַשְׁתּוֹ וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי
כַּמַּטָּרָא לַחֵץ׃

12 He worked His bow and made me
stand as the target for the arrow;

יג הֵבִיא בְּכִלְיוֹתָי
בְּנֵי אַשְׁפָּתוֹ׃

13 He guided into my kidneys
what came from His quiver,

יד הָיִיתִי שְּׂחֹק לְכָל־עַמִּי
נְגִינָתָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם׃

14 I was a laughingstock for all my
people, their song all the day.

טו הִשְׂבִּיעַנִי בַמְּרוֹרִים
הִרְוַנִי לַעֲנָה׃

15 He sated me with bitter herbs,
and overfilled me with wormwood;

טז וַיַּגְרֵס בֶּחָצָץ שִׁנָּי	16 He broke my teeth with gravel,
הִכְפִּישַׁנִי בָּאֵפֶר׃	and pressed me into the ashes.
יז וַתִּזְנַח מִשָּׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי	17 My soul was spurned from peace;
נָשִׁיתִי טוֹבָה׃	I forgot goodness,
יח וָאֹמַר אָבַד נִצְחִי	18 and I said, “I have lost from *YHVH*
וְתוֹחַלְתִּי מֵיְהוָה׃	my endurance and my hope!”
יט זְכָר־עָנְיִי	19 Remember my affliction and
וּמְרוּדִי לַעֲנָה וָרֹאשׁ׃	my scattering – wormwood and gall;
כ זָכוֹר תִּזְכּוֹר	20 Remembering, she will remember,
וְתָשׁוֹחַ עָלַי נַפְשִׁי׃	my soul, and will sink down upon me.
כא זֹאת אָשִׁיב אֶל־לִבִּי	21 (Still) this will I turn toward my heart,
עַל־כֵּן אוֹחִיל׃	for so will I hope:
כב חַסְדֵי יְהוָה	22 *YHVH’s* love / kindnesses
כִּי לֹא־תָמְנוּ	– they are never done,
כִּי לֹא־כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו׃	for His mercies were not used up.
כג חֲדָשִׁים לַבְּקָרִים	23 They are new by every morning;
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ׃	great is Your trust / faithfulness!
כד חֶלְקִי יְהוָה	24 My portion is *YHVH*
אָמְרָה נַפְשִׁי	—said my soul—
עַל־כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ׃	therefore so will I hope for Him.
כה טוֹב יְהוָה	25 Good is *YHVH*
לְקוָֹו	to those waiting for Him,

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לְנֶ֖פֶשׁ תִּדְרְשֶֽׁנּוּ׃	to a soul / person that would seek Him.
כו ט֤וֹב וְיָחִיל֙ וְדוּמָ֔ם	26 Good – and he should wait and
לִתְשׁוּעַ֖ת יְהוָֽה׃	be silent, wait for *YHVH's* salvation.
כז ט֣וֹב לַגֶּ֔בֶר	27 Good it is for a man
כִּֽי־יִשָּׂ֥א עֹ֖ל בִּנְעוּרָֽיו׃	that he carry a yoke in his youth.
כח יֵשֵׁ֤ב בָּדָד֙ וְיִדֹּ֔ם	28 Let him sit alone and be silent,
כִּ֥י נָטַ֖ל עָלָֽיו׃	since He laid (it) on him;
כט יִתֵּ֤ן בֶּֽעָפָר֙ פִּ֔יהוּ	29 he should put his mouth in the dust –
אוּלַ֖י יֵ֥שׁ תִּקְוָֽה׃	maybe there is hope;
ל יִתֵּ֧ן לְמַכֵּ֛הוּ לֶ֖חִי	30 Put out his cheek for the one who
יִשְׂבַּ֥ע בְּחֶרְפָּֽה׃	strikes, be satiated with shame.
לא כִּ֣י לֹ֥א יִזְנַ֛ח	31 For *Adonai* would not
לְעוֹלָ֖ם אֲדֹנָֽי׃	spurn forever;
לב כִּ֚י אִם־הוֹגָ֔ה וְרִחַ֖ם	32 for if He aggrieved and showed mercy,
כְּרֹ֥ב חֲסָדָֽיו׃	it is according to His love's abundance;
לג כִּ֣י לֹ֤א עִנָּה֙ מִלִּבּ֔וֹ	33 for He did not afflict from His heart
וַיַּגֶּ֖ה בְּנֵי־אִֽישׁ׃	and aggrieve human beings.
לד לְדַכֵּא֙ תַּ֣חַת רַגְלָ֔יו	34 To crush under His feet
כֹּ֖ל אֲסִ֥ירֵי אָֽרֶץ׃	all imprisoned of the land,
לה לְהַטּוֹת֙ מִשְׁפַּט־גָּ֔בֶר	35 to make bent a man's judgment,
נֶ֖גֶד פְּנֵ֥י עֶלְיֽוֹן׃	right to the face of the Highest,
לו לְעַוֵּ֤ת אָדָם֙ בְּרִיב֔וֹ	36 to twist / wrong a person in his

אֲדֹנָ֖י לֹ֥א רָאָֽה׃	struggle – wouldn't *Adonai* see (that)?
לז מִ֣י זֶ֤ה אָמַר֙ וַתֶּ֔הִי	37 Who is this who spoke and it was
אֲדֹנָ֖י לֹ֥א צִוָּֽה׃	– didn't *Adonai* so command?
לח מִפִּ֤י עֶלְיוֹן֙ לֹ֣א תֵצֵ֔א	38 From the mouth of the Highest
הָרָע֖וֹת וְהַטּֽוֹב׃	don't the evils and the good come out?
לט מַה־יִּתְאוֹנֵן֙ אָדָ֣ם חָ֔י	39 How could a living person complain,
גֶּ֖בֶר עַל־חֲטָאָֽיו׃	a man, (if punished) for his sins?
מ נַחְפְּשָׂ֤ה דְרָכֵ֙ינוּ֙ וְֽנַחְקֹ֔רָה	40 Let us search our ways and dig deep,
וְנָשׁ֖וּבָה עַד־יְהוָֽה׃	and let us return until *YHVH*,
מא נִשָּׂ֤א לְבָבֵ֙נוּ֙	41 Let us lift our hearts
אֶל־כַּפָּ֔יִם	up to our hands (stretching them)
אֶל־אֵ֖ל בַּשָּׁמָֽיִם׃	toward God in the heavens.
מב נַ֤חְנוּ פָשַׁ֙עְנוּ֙ וּמָרִ֔ינוּ	42 Us, we sinned and rebelled.
אַתָּ֖ה לֹ֥א סָלָֽחְתָּ׃	You – You did not pardon.
מג סַכֹּ֤תָה בָאַף֙	43 You took shelter in such anger,
וַֽתִּרְדְּפֵ֔נוּ	and You would pursue us,
הָרַ֖גְתָּ לֹ֥א חָמָֽלְתָּ׃	You murdered without pitying;
מד סַכּ֤וֹתָה בֶֽעָנָן֙ לָ֔ךְ	44 You sheltered Yourself within a
מֵעֲב֖וֹר תְּפִלָּֽה׃	cloud, far beyond prayer;
מה סְחִ֧י וּמָא֛וֹס	45 Scum and refuse
תְּשִׂימֵ֖נוּ	You would make us
בְּקֶ֥רֶב הָעַמִּֽים׃	in the midst of the peoples.

 This work is dedicated to all refuges fleeing war and upheaval, and to our remembering their needs.

מו פָּצוּ עָלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם
כָּל־אֹיְבֵינוּ׃

46 All our enemies crack open
their mouth against us;

מז פַּחַד וָפַחַת הָיָה לָנוּ
הַשֵּׁאת וְהַשָּׁבֶר׃

47 Trepidation and trap were ours,
the ruination and the shattering.

מח פַּלְגֵי־מַיִם֙ תֵּרַד עֵינִי
עַל־שֶׁבֶר בַּת־עַמִּי׃

48 My eye drops floods of water
for my daughter people’s shattering;

מט עֵינִי נִגְּרָה
וְלֹא תִדְמֶה
מֵאֵין הֲפֻגוֹת׃

49 My eye streams
and won’t silence herself,
(she cries) with no breaks / no stutters,

נ עַד־יַשְׁקִיף
וְיֵרֶא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמָיִם׃

50 until *YHVH* would look down
and see from heaven.

נא עֵינִי֙ עוֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי
מִכֹּל בְּנוֹת עִירִי׃

51 My eye doles sorrow to my soul
over all my city’s daughters.

נב צוֹד צָדוּנִי כַּצִּפּוֹר
אֹיְבַי חִנָּם׃

52 Hunting, they hunted me, like a bird,
(becoming) my enemies for no reason;

נג צָמְתוּ בַבּוֹר֙ חַיָּי
וַיַּדּוּ־אֶבֶן בִּי׃

53 they sealed off my life in the pit,
and cast stone against me;

נד צָפוּ־מַיִם עַל־רֹאשִׁי
אָמַרְתִּי נִגְזָרְתִּי׃

54 waters flowed over my head,
“I am cut off,” I said.

נה קָרָאתִי שִׁמְךָ֙ יְהוָה
מִבּוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת׃

55 I called Your name, *YHVH*,
from a pit far underground.

נו קוֹלִי שָׁמָעְתָּ

56 You heard my voice:

אַל־תַּעְלֵם אָזְנְךָ	Don’t hide / conceal your ear
לְרַוְחָתִי לְשַׁוְעָתִי׃	to my (plea for) relief, to my cry.
נז קָרַבְתָּ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָאֶךָּ	57 You were near the day I would call,
אָמַרְתָּ אַל־תִּירָא׃	You said, “Don’t fear.”
נח רַבְתָּ אֲדֹנָי	58 *Adonai*, You struggled (in) my
רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי גָּאַלְתָּ חַיָּי׃	soul’s struggles; You saved my life.
נט רָאִיתָה יְהוָה עַוָּתָתִי	59 You saw my twisting;
שָׁפְטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי׃	(now) judge my judgment!
ס רָאִיתָה כָּל־נִקְמָתָם	60 You saw all their vengeance
כָּל־מַחְשְׁבֹתָם לִי׃	all their designs for me.
סא שָׁמַעְתָּ חֶרְפָּתָם יְהוָה	61 You heard their shaming, *YHVH*,
כָּל־מַחְשְׁבֹתָם עָלָי׃	all their designs against me,
סב שִׂפְתֵי קָמַי	62 the speech of those rising at me,
וְהֶגְיוֹנָם עָלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם׃	their obsession over me every day,
סג שִׁבְתָּם וְקִימָתָם	63 (whether) sitting or rising up –
הַבִּיטָה אֲנִי מַנְגִּינָתָם	Look! I am their singsong!
סד תָּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּל	64 You will pay them back, *YHVH*,
יְהוָה כְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם׃	according to the work of their hands;
סה תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מְגִנַּת־לֵב	65 You will make theirs a heart walled
תַּאֲלָתְךָ לָהֶם׃	up – let Your curse be for them!
סו תִּרְדֹּף בְּאַף וְתַשְׁמִידֵם	66 Pursue in anger and destroy them
מִתַּחַת שְׁמֵי יְהוָה׃	from under *YHVH’s* heavens.

CHAPTER 4

א אֵיכָה	1 *Eikhah!* How can it be –
יוּעַם זָהָב	gold becomes dull,
יִשְׁנֶא הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב	the best gold transmuted,
תִּשְׁתַּפֵּכְנָה אַבְנֵי־קֹדֶשׁ	stones of the holy poured / dumped out
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצוֹת׃	at every street head;
ב בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים	2 Zion's children, precious ones,
הַמְסֻלָּאִים בַּפָּז	weighed against the purest gold –
אֵיכָה נֶחְשְׁבוּ	how can it be that they are counted
לְנִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׂ	as clay jars,
מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי יוֹצֵר׃	work of a maker's hands?
ג גַּם־תַּנִּים חָלְצוּ שַׁד	3 Even jackals draw out a breast,
הֵינִיקוּ גּוּרֵיהֶן	would give suck to their cubs.
בַּת־עַמִּי לְאַכְזָר	(But) my daughter people – so cruel,
כַּיְעֵנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר׃	like ostriches in the wilderness.
ד דָּבַק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק	4 A suckling's tongue, stuck
אֶל־חִכּוֹ בַּצָּמָא	to its palate with such thirst;
עוֹלָלִים שָׁאֲלוּ לֶחֶם	babes sought bread –
פֹּרֵשׂ אֵין לָהֶם׃	none break it off for them.
ה הָאֹכְלִים לְמַעֲדַנִּים	5 The ones who eat for delicacies
נָשַׁמּוּ בַּחוּצוֹת	were wasted in the streets,
הָאֱמֻנִים עֲלֵי תוֹלָע	the ones nursed on scarlet
חִבְּקוּ אַשְׁפַּתּוֹת׃	were hugging trash heaps.
ו וַיִּגְדַּל עֲוֺן בַּת־עַמִּי	6 And my daughter people's iniquity

מֵחַטַּאת סְדֹם	grew great, beyond the sin of Sodom,
הַהֲפוּכָה כְמוֹ־רָגַע	the one overthrown, as (in) a moment,
וְלֹא־חָלוּ בָהּ יָדָיִם׃	and no hands were laid on her.
ז זַכּוּ נְזִירֶיהָ מִשֶּׁלֶג	7 Her Nazirites were pure beyond snow,
צַחוּ מֵחָלָב	clearer than milk,
אָדְמוּ עֶצֶם מִפְּנִינִים	red of bone, more than rubies,
סַפִּיר גִּזְרָתָם׃	their cut shape sapphire crystal.
ח חָשַׁךְ מִשְּׁחוֹר	8 (Now) darkened beyond black soot
תָּאֳרָם	is their form,
לֹא נִכְּרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת	they are not recognized in the streets,
צָפַד עוֹרָם עַל־עַצְמָם	their skin stretched taut over their bone,
יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כָעֵץ׃	it was dried out like a stick.
ט טוֹבִים הָיוּ חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב	9 Better were the sword-slain
מֵחַלְלֵי רָעָב	than the famine-slain,
שֶׁהֵם יָזוּבוּ מְדֻקָּרִים	for those drain away, stabbed through
מִתְּנוּבֹת שָׂדָי׃	from (want of) produce of the field.
י יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת	10 Merciful hands of merciful women
בִּשְּׁלוּ יַלְדֵיהֶן	stewed their children –
הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לָמוֹ	they became provision for them
בְּשֶׁבֶר בַּת־עַמִּי׃	in the shattering of my daughter people.
יא כִּלָּה יְהוָה אֶת־חֲמָתוֹ	11 *YHVH* used up His fury,
שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ	poured out His burning anger,
וַיַּצֶּת־אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן	and He kindled a fire in Zion,
וַתֹּאכַל יְסוֹדֹתֶיהָ׃	and she consumed her foundations.
יב לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ	12 They would not have believed,

מַלְכֵי־אֶ֔רֶץ	kings of the earth
כֹּ֖ל יֹשְׁבֵ֣י תֵבֵ֑ל	all the inhabitants of the world,
כִּ֤י יָבֹא֙ צַ֣ר וְאוֹיֵ֔ב	that tormentor and enemy would come
בְּשַׁעֲרֵ֖י יְרוּשָׁלָֽם׃	into the gates of Jerusalem –
יג מֵֽחַטֹּ֣את נְבִיאֶ֔יהָ	13 because of her prophets’ sins,
עֲוֺנ֖וֹת כֹּהֲנֶ֑יהָ	her priests’ wrongs / iniquities,
הַשֹּׁפְכִ֥ים בְּקִרְבָּ֖הּ	the ones who poured out inside her
דַּ֥ם צַדִּיקִֽים׃	the blood of righteous people.
יד נָע֤וּ עִוְרִים֙	14 They were shaking / staggering, blind
בַּֽחוּצ֔וֹת נְגֹֽאֲל֖וּ בַּדָּ֑ם	in the streets, defiled with the blood,
בְּלֹ֣א יֽוּכְל֔וּ	with none able / none willing (to)
יִגְּע֖וּ בִּלְבֻשֵׁיהֶֽם׃	come in contact with their clothes.
טו ס֣וּרוּ טָמֵ֞א	15 “Get out! Contaminated! / *Tamei!”*
קָ֣רְאוּ לָ֗מוֹ	they would call to them,
ס֤וּרוּ ס֙וּרוּ֙ אַל־תִּגָּ֔עוּ	“Get out! Get out! Don't touch!”
כִּ֥י נָצ֖וּ גַּם־נָ֑עוּ	For they fled, even staggered.
אָֽמְרוּ֙ בַּגּוֹיִ֔ם	They said in the nations,
לֹ֥א יוֹסִ֖יפוּ לָגֽוּר׃	they will no more (be allowed) to dwell.
טז פְּנֵ֤י יְהוָה֙	16 *YHVH’s* presence / face
חִלְּקָ֔ם לֹ֥א יוֹסִ֖יף	divided them, He would no more
לְהַבִּיטָ֑ם	look at them / notice them –
פְּנֵ֤י כֹהֲנִים֙ לֹ֣א נָשָׂ֔אוּ	(for) priest’s faces they did not lift up,
וּזְקֵנִ֖ים לֹ֥א חָנָֽנוּ׃	and (to) elders they did not show grace.
יז עוֹדֵ֙ינוּ֙ תִּכְלֶ֣ינָה עֵינֵ֔ינוּ	17 Still will our eyes be used up / failing,
אֶל־עֶזְרָתֵ֖נוּ הָ֑בֶל	toward our help, (which is) emptiness.

בְּצִפִּיָּתֵנוּ צִפִּינוּ אֶל־גּוֹי	In our seeking, we sought / we peered
לֹא יוֹשִׁעַ׃	toward a nation not (able to) save.
יח צָדוּ צְעָדֵינוּ	18 They hunted / tracked our steps,
מִלֶּכֶת בִּרְחֹבֹתֵינוּ	(driven) from going in our squares.
קָרַב קִצֵּינוּ מָלְאוּ יָמֵינוּ	Our end draws close, our days filled,
כִּי־בָא קִצֵּינוּ׃	for our end has come.
יט קַלִּים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ	19 Swift were they, our pursuers,
מִנִּשְׁרֵי שָׁמָיִם	more than eagles of the heavens.
עַל־הֶהָרִים דְּלָקֻנוּ	Over the mountains they chased us,
בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ׃	in the wilderness they laid ambush for us.
כ רוּחַ אַפֵּינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה	20 Breath of our nose, *YHVH's* anointed,
נִלְכַּד בִּשְׁחִיתוֹתָם	he was trapped by their destructions,
אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ	(the one) whom we said, "In his shade
נִחְיֶה בַגּוֹיִם׃	we will live with the nations."
כא שִׂישִׂי וְשִׂמְחִי בַּת־אֱדוֹם	21 Rejoice and be happy, daughter Edom,
יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עוּץ	dwelling in the land of Utz –
גַּם־עָלַיִךְ תַּעֲבָר־כּוֹס	a cup will also pass over (to) you,
תִּשְׁכְּרִי וְתִתְעָרִי׃	you will drink and strip yourself naked.
כב תַּם־עֲוֺנֵךְ	22 Complete be your iniquity,
בַּת־צִיּוֹן	daughter Zion,
לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתֵךְ	no more to be exiled / exposed.
פָּקַד עֲוֺנֵךְ	He has charged your iniquity,
בַּת־אֱדוֹם	daughter Edom,
גִּלָּה עַל־חַטֹּאתָיִךְ׃	exposed (you) for your sins.

CHAPTER 5

א זְכֹר יְהוָה֙ מֶה־הָיָה לָנוּ
הַבִּיטָה וּרְאֵה
אֶת־חֶרְפָּתֵנוּ׃

1 *YHVH*, remember what was ours.
Look, and see
our abuse / our shame!

ב נַחֲלָתֵ֙נוּ נֶהֶפְכָה לְזָרִים
בָּתֵּינוּ לְנָכְרִים׃

2 Our inheritance overturned to strangers,
our houses to foreigners.

ג יְתוֹמִים הָיִ֙ינוּ וְאֵין אָב
אִמֹּתֵינוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת׃

3 We were orphans, there is no father,
our mothers like widows.

ד מֵימֵ֙ינוּ בְּכֶסֶף שָׁתִינוּ
עֵצֵינוּ בִּמְחִיר יָבֹאוּ׃

4 Our water we drank for money;
our wood came (only) with a price.

ה עַל צַוָּארֵ֙נוּ נִרְדָּפְנוּ
יָגַעְנוּ וְלֹא הוּנַח־לָנוּ׃

5 On our neck were we pursued,
weary, and none would let us (rest).

ו מִצְרַיִם֙ נָתַנּוּ יָד
אַשּׁוּר לִשְׂבֹּעַ לָחֶם׃

6 Egypt, we stretched a hand,
Assyria, to satisfy bread.

ז אֲבֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ֙ וְאֵינָם
וַאֲנַחְנוּ עֲוֹנֹתֵיהֶם סָבָלְנוּ׃

7 Our fathers sinned and are not,
and we shouldered their iniquities.

ח עֲבָדִים֙ מָשְׁלוּ בָנוּ
פֹּרֵק אֵין מִיָּדָם׃

8 Slaves ruled us.
None can break us out from their hand.

ט בְּנַפְשֵׁ֙נוּ נָבִיא לַחְמֵנוּ
מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר׃

9 For our lives we bring our bread,
from before the wilderness's sword.

י עוֹרֵ֙נוּ כְּתַנּוּר נִכְמָרוּ
מִפְּנֵי זַלְעֲפוֹת רָעָב׃

10 Our skin like a furnace, glowing,
from before the delirium of hunger.

יא נָשִׁים֙ בְּצִיּוֹן עִנּוּ
בְּתֻלֹת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה׃

11 Women in Zion were victimized,
girls, in Judah's towns.

יב שָׂרִים֙ בְּיָדָ֣ם נִתְל֔וּ
פְּנֵ֥י זְקֵנִ֖ים לֹ֥א נֶהְדָּֽרוּ׃

12 Ministers by their hand were hung.
Elders' faces shown no majesty / respect.

יג בַּחוּרִים֙ טְח֣וֹן נָשָׂ֔אוּ
וּנְעָרִ֖ים בָּעֵ֥ץ כָּשָֽׁלוּ׃

13 Boys would carry a millstone,
and youths, stumbling with wood.

יד זְקֵנִים֙ מִשַּׁ֣עַר שָׁבָ֔תוּ
בַּחוּרִ֖ים מִנְּגִינָתָֽם׃

14 Elders ceased from gate,
boys from their play.

טו שָׁבַת֙ מְשׂ֣וֹשׂ לִבֵּ֔נוּ
נֶהְפַּ֥ךְ לְאֵ֖בֶל מְחֹלֵֽנוּ׃

15 Our heart ceased / stopped any joy,
our dance overturned into mourning.

טז נָֽפְלָה֙ עֲטֶ֣רֶת רֹאשֵׁ֔נוּ
אוֹי־נָ֥א לָ֖נוּ כִּ֥י חָטָֽאנוּ׃

16 The crown on our head is fallen;
Oy for us! For we sinned.

יז עַל־זֶ֗ה הָיָ֤ה דָוֶה֙ לִבֵּ֔נוּ
עַל־אֵ֖לֶּה חָשְׁכ֥וּ עֵינֵֽינוּ׃

17 For this our heart was sickened.
For these our eyes darkened.

יח עַ֤ל הַר־צִיּוֹן֙ שֶׁשָּׁמֵ֔ם
שׁוּעָלִ֖ים הִלְּכוּ־בֽוֹ׃

18 For Mount Zion, that was desolated,
foxes went through her.

יט אַתָּ֤ה יְהוָה֙
לְעוֹלָ֣ם תֵּשֵׁ֔ב
כִּסְאֲךָ֖ לְדֹ֥ר וָדֽוֹר׃

19 You, *YHVH*
will sit for all world-time,
Your throne (lasts) for generations.

כ לָ֤מָּה לָנֶ֙צַח֙ תִּשְׁכָּחֵ֔נוּ
תַּעַזְבֵ֖נוּ לְאֹ֥רֶךְ יָמִֽים׃

20 Why would you forget us forever?
Abandon us for the span of time's days?

כא הֲשִׁיבֵ֨נוּ יְהוָ֤ה אֵלֶ֙יךָ֙
וְֽנָשׁ֔וּבָה
חַדֵּ֥שׁ יָמֵ֖ינוּ כְּקֶֽדֶם׃

21 Turn us, *YHVH*, toward you,
and we will turn.
Renew our days, like long before,

כב כִּ֚י אִם־מָאֹ֣ס
מְאַסְתָּ֔נוּ קָצַ֥פְתָּ עָלֵ֖ינוּ
עַד־מְאֹֽד

22 for (what) if rejecting you did reject
us / loath us, were enraged over us,
so very much—!

Hashiveinu	הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ	Turn us,
Adonai elekha	יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ	*YHVH*, toward you,
v'nashuvah	וְנָשׁוּבָה	and we will turn.
Chadesh yamenu	חַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ	Make our days new again,
k'kedem	כְּקֶדֶם׃	like dawn / long ago.

Some more songs:

Shifkhi kamayim libeikh
nokhach p'nei Hashem

Pour out your heart like water
right before *Hashem*

Yehudah l'olam teishev,
Yerushalayim l'dor vador

Judah will dwell for all time,
Jerusalem for generations

By the waters of Babylon we sat
down and wept for thee Zion
We remember thee Zion

Nachamu 'ami.
Anokhi hu m'nachemchem

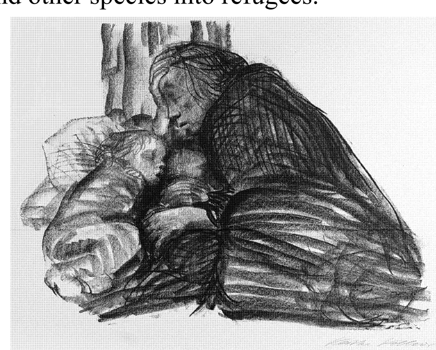
Take comfort my people
I am the one who comforts you

Eli Tsiyon v'areha
k'mo ishah v'tsireha
v'khivtulah chagurat sak
al ba'al n'ureha

My God, Zion and her towns, like
a woman in travail, like a virgin
wearing sackcloth for the
husband of her youth

The observances of Tish'a B'Av

The observances of *Tish'a B'Av*—not wearing fresh clothes, not washing, fasting from eating and drinking and sexual contact, not greeting each other, not sitting anywhere except on the ground—are closer to the experience of being a refugee than to being a mourner. The destruction of the Temple stands not just for the destruction of Jerusalem, but for the city being turned into a war zone, and the people becoming prey to hunger, violence, and death. *Tish'a B'Av* is not primarily about the Temple – *Chaza"l*, the rabbis, figured out how to live without the Temple long ago. Rather, *Tish'a B'Av* is about homelessness, fleeing from war into famine, being thrown into a hostile world without shelter or protection – things all too present in our world. It's an opportunity empathize, to confront the ways we abuse our power, as individuals, as a society, as a people, and as a species, turning other people and other species into refugees.



City Shelter, Kathe Kollwitz, 1926, public domain

Some notes on the theology of *Eikhah*:

1. *Tish'a B'Av* could not be more relevant than it is today, when the crisis of war refugees and fear of terrorism have overwhelmed the political process in so many countries. We think of *Tish'a B'Av* as a time of mourning, but it is more importantly a call to identify with the experience of refugees who are forced to risk their lives and even their children's lives in order to escape violence, hunger, devastation. That's what the Jewish people went through when the Temple, and the nation and society it stood for, were destroyed, when they became "like deer, not finding a place to graze, walking without strength before a pursuer." (1:6)

2. The idea that tragedy and disaster are punishment for sins seems alien to many modern Jews. This is also why it can be hard to connect the Holocaust with *Tish'a B'Av*. But this theology can also be consoling, because it allows people to find meaning in tragedy.

3. The author(s) of *Eikhah* (traditionally Jeremiah) believed that what happened to Jerusalem expressed divine judgment. For our ancestors, the choice was to believe either that the destruction was God's punishment, or that God no longer cared about what happened to them. It is easy to imagine people choosing a punishing God over an uncaring God (though the latter possibility is also suggested in the last verse of *Eikhah*). Even though *Eikhah* sounds like it's about God punishing us, it's not really a theodicy, a justification of God. Rather, it expresses the hope that tragedy proves that God cares about us, instead of proving the opposite.

4. That doesn't mean we need to accept that theology – even in *Eikhah* itself, this idea is questioned. Only in chapter three is Zion's destruction consistently seen as fair and just punishment. In all the other chapters, the degree of divine punishment is described as excessive and abusive. In every chapter, the poet begs God to pay attention: "See, *YHVH*, and look: to whom did You deal thus? If women will eat their fruit, coddled babes – !"(2:20; also 1:9, 1:11, 1:20, 3:63, 4:16, 5:1). It's as if other people could see and understand the tragedy that unfolded (1:12), but God could not.

5. This suggests one way to confront the images of sexual abuse in *Eikhah*: "All who honor her despise her, for they saw her nakedness." (1:8; also 1:10, 4:21, 5:11) In the prophets, such abuse is a metaphor for the "just" punishment that follows Israel's "adulterous" pursuit of other gods. But in *Eikhah*, the metaphor is used to hold up a mirror to God, to show that the punishment was intolerably abusive.

6. The real theology of *Eikhah* is summed up in the verse, "What can I compare to you, daughter Jerusalem, that I may comfort you?" (2:13) What images, what words, can help people bear the memory of tragedy? The poet is willing to say whatever is needed to enable the people to find meaning.

7. There is another way to understand the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah, the reason for the exile was that Israel did not let the land rest every seven years after they entered the land. (2 Chron. 36:21) Since 490 years had passed without a sabbatical year, Israel had to go into exile for 70 years.

8. What does this mean? The Torah portrays the land as a subject with rights and interests that take priority over our needs. Especially in the flood story and the laws of Jubilee and sabbatical years (Lev. 25)—and in the consequences that are supposed to befall the people if they do not observe these laws (Lev. 26)—the Torah teaches that God will take the side of the land against the people if forced to. The land will "enjoy her Sabbaths" (Lev. 26:34,43) – even if that means the people are exiled or wiped out. From the divine perspective, the land can sue for justice. What has intrinsic value is not humanity but justice, which is humanity's potential. See: neohasid.org/torah/genesis-shmitah

9. The Torah outlines six curses for not observing the sabbatical year that describe an unraveling relationship between people and land. Two curses involve children being eaten – by wild animals (v.22), then by their parents (v.29). That image is repeated in *Eikhah* (2:20, 4:10), and it is the main connection between *Eikhah* and Leviticus. The final curse in Leviticus is that "you will be lost in the nations and the land of your enemies will eat you" (v.38). The last curse does not sound like the worst. But if the land eats us, this represents a complete reversal of the right relationship between the people and the land.

10. In ancient times, people believed that the Temple existed to promote fertility and abundance. Temple rituals were performed for the sake of the land and for all life, not just for the Jews or even for all humanity. The Temple's purpose had already been destroyed by the way people treated the land.

11. The idea that destruction came because of how the Jewish people treated the land is not found in *Eikhah*, where identification of the land with the people is total. Instead, Jerusalem's downfall results from the moral downfall in relationships between human beings. In Jeremiah too, the fate of Jerusalem is sealed only after the rich, who briefly set their slaves free, re-enslave them when it looks like the danger has passed. (Jer. 34) How we treat the stranger, the poor, the refugee, is what determines if we have the right to be in the land.

12. Creation is compared to a sacred Temple (*Tanchuma Pekudei, P'ri Eitz Hadar*). In an age when our ecological "sins" are coming home to roost, the connection between natural disaster and divine retribution is not farfetched. However, when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, there were other lands to flee to. If we destroy the Temple that is this Earth, there will be no place to flee. (Cantor Richard Kaplan's *Kinah L'churban Gan Eden,* on neohasid.org, can help you focus on this theme.)

13. We can expect more wars over resources, as well as people fleeing areas that have flooded or become deserts, as climate change puts more pressure on our ecosystems and our social systems. We need all the spiritual resources we can muster to stay open to the humanity of the refugee and the stranger while also taking care of each other. *Eikhah* is an invitation to move towards justice for all people, for all species, and for the land herself.

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